

Religious Accommodation Guidelines--(this is copied from the OIE website)

Cleveland State University values diversity and understands religious practice as one factor enriching our campus's cultural and ethnic landscape. CSU's faculty and administration respect the different demands that religions might make on the faithful and, therefore, support and accommodate students, faculty, and staff of all faiths so that religious observance does not negatively affect academic success.

CSU prohibits religious and all other forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment. The *Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Violence and Retaliation* includes religion in its list of forms of discrimination that the University strongly opposes and does not tolerate.

The Office of Institutional Equity, in collaboration with the Faculty Senate's University Faculty Affairs Committee and Committee for Diversity and Inclusion, has developed these guidelines to help members of the University community understand expectations and obligations regarding the accommodation of religious practices.

The University provides reasonable accommodations for religious practices of students, faculty and staff.

- Some examples of reasonable religious accommodations include schedule changes, excused absences, minor revisions to job duties or course expectations, exceptions to syllabi policies and classroom practices, flexible scheduling, and exceptions to workplace policies such as dress or grooming requirements.
- An accommodation is not reasonable if it: creates a direct threat to the health or safety of others or the person seeking the accommodation; disrupts instruction, learning or university operations; creates an undue hardship on the University; or requires a substantial alteration in the manner in which instruction is delivered, students are assessed, or services are provided.

Faculty and staff should request religious accommodations from supervisors, including departmental chairs, associate deans or program directors.

- Faculty should request accommodations that may involve an absence from class for holidays occurring during the semester before the semester begins. Staff should request accommodations involving an absence from work in a timely manner that will permit the supervisor to arrange coverage for the staff member's absence.
- Religious accommodations should be worked out in advance with the supervisor, departmental chair, associate dean, director or other appropriate administrator. If necessary, the supervisor's supervisor, Human Resources and/or the Office for Institutional Equity may provide input and answer questions. Faculty and staff dissatisfied with the outcome of those discussions may contact the Office for Institutional Equity. Faculty accommodations should be reflected in syllabi (e.g. class cancellations are noted) Faculty should take their religious calendar into account when setting course schedules, especially when teaching classes that meet only a few times in the semester or for less than sixteen weeks. Faculty accommodations are not reasonable if they diminish academic standards or negatively impact instructional hours.

Students should request religious accommodations directly from instructors.

- Students should provide their instructors with reasonable advance notice of their need for a religious accommodation. Students should consult their instructors within two weeks of the beginning of the semester.
- Religious accommodations should be worked out in advance with the instructor. Instructors must provide reasonable accommodations. If necessary, the instructor's chair and the Office of Institutional Equity may provide input and answer questions. Students dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions with the instructor may contact the Office for Institutional Equity.
- Religious accommodations must be reasonable. What is reasonable for a particular student will depend on the type of class (e.g. lab, clinical or field work experience), the duration of the course (8, 10 or 16 weeks), the nature of the accommodation being requested (e.g. a single day absence vs. a three-week absence) and other relevant factors.
- Religious accommodations should not have an unreasonable impact on faculty workload or student instructional hours.
- Students should take their religious calendar into account when making their course schedules, especially in cases of classes that meet only a few times in the semester or for a short period of time.
- Failure of a student to provide reasonable advance notice of the need for a religious accommodation is not a basis for an instructor to refuse to provide the accommodation, but might impact what accommodation is reasonable under the circumstances.

Additional examples of religious accommodations for students, that may be reasonable under the circumstances, include:

- If permitted in the facilities, allow the student to bring and consume food and/or drink in class during periods of fasting.
- Allow the student to designate a note-taker for a day on which a religious holiday requires the student to miss class.
- Alter discussion time period on Blackboard so that a student has an opportunity to post at a time that is not consecutive with the student's Sabbath or a religious holiday.

Examples of adjustments to course policies that may be reasonable as a religious accommodation includes:

- Attendance policies are often adjusted to accommodate students who must be absent to observe a religious holiday. Common disputes involve whether an absence for religious observance may be counted as an excused or no-fault absence. So that religious practice does not disadvantage one student compared to another, an absence for religious observance may not reduce the number of class days a student could take advantage of through a no-fault absence policy.
- Assignment due dates are often adjusted when they fall on or immediately adjacent to a religious holiday or the Sabbath. By agreement with the instructor, alternate due dates or other arrangements may require students to complete work slightly earlier or allow them to finish slightly later than other students in the class.
- By the same token, exam dates may be adjusted to accommodate students with religious observance requirements that conflict with dates on the syllabus and the academic calendar. Faculty may contact the Office for Institutional Equity if they want to arrange for a student who is receiving a religious accommodation to take an exam in Testing Services.

Recommendation for syllabus

Requests for religious accommodations should be made at the beginning of the semester (within the first two weeks). The request should be made using the Absence Authorization Form located on the Faculty Senate Webpage and the University Compliance webpage, and must include dates, reasons, duration of absence.